

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 DUBLIN 01380 01 OF 02 031247Z

42

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAM-01 SAJ-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 ACDA-19

IO-14 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 NIC-01

DRC-01 /139 W

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R 031140Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6044

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 DUBLIN 1380

LONDON POUCH BELFAST

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT EI UK ,NI)

SUBJ: ASSESSMENT OF IRISH TROUBLES: DANGEROUS STALEMATE

SUMMARY: THIS REVIEWS IRISH "TROUBLES." CURRENT SITUATION, AS WE SEE IT, IS UNSTABLE STALEMATE, WITH RISK OF DETERIORATION INTO MORE SERIOUS VIOLENCE. BRITISH POLICY IS STILL ON RIGHT TRACK BUT SEEMS LESS EFFECTIVE THAN IN PAST. DUBLIN POLICY IS NOT EFFECTIVE AT ALL, AND DUBLIN GOVT HAS AVOIDED STEPS THAT BADLY NEED TO BE TAKEN. WE MAKE NO NEW POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USG, BUT IT IS STILL IMPORTANT TO REDUCE AMERICAN SUPPORT FOR IRISH TERRORISTS. END SUMMARY.

1. THERE IS STILL NO CLEAR WAY OUT OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND TROUBLES, AND THERE IS A REAL CHANCE THAT THEY WILL DETERIORATE INTO EVEN WORSE CIVIL VIOLENCE. DESPITE REGULAR ATROCITIES, THE SECURITY SITUATION ON THE GROUND IS NOT, FOR THE MOMENT, DESPERATE. UNFORTUNATELY, THIS RELATIVE QUIET SEEMS TO BE ONLY A BREATHING SPELL BETWEEN POLITICAL CONVULSIONS. RESISTANCE FROM LARGE PART OF THE PROTESTANT COMMUNITY BROUGHT AN END TO THE "SUNNINGDALE EXPERI-  
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PAGE 02 DUBLIN 01380 01 OF 02 031247Z

MENT," WHICH WAS NORTHERN IRELAND'S FIRST ATTEMPT AT A JOINT PROTESTA

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CATHOLIC GOVERNMENT. BUT THE TORPEDOING OF SUNNINGDALE ONLY PROVED THAT PROTESTANTS STILL HAVE THE KIND OF MUSCLE THEY HAVE USED TO REPRESS CATHOLICS FOR YEARS. ANY SERIOUS POLITICAL FORMULA FOR COMPROMISE MUST PROBABLY CONTAIN THE SUNNINGDALE INGREDIENTS: REAL "POWER-SHARING" BETWEEN PROTESTANT AND CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES, CIVIL-RIGHTS REFORMS, AND AN "IRISH DIMENSION" (PROVISION FOR CLOSER COOPERATION WITH THE REPUBLIC). IN THE LONG TERM, IRELAND STILL SEEMS TO HAVE ONLY TWO BASIC OPTIONS: TO GO FORWARD UNDER SOME FORMULA SIMILAR TO SUNNINGDALE, OR TO GO BACKWARD TOWARD VIOLENCE. OVER THE LAST YEAR, ACTORS AND STAGE SETTINGS HAVE CHANGED RAPIDLY, BUT THE SCENARIO IS STILL ABOUT THE SAME.

2. OVER THE NEXT SIX MONTHS, THERE WILL PROBABLY BE A NEW CHANCE TO WORK OUT A COMPROMISE, VIA AN ELECTED CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY. NO QUALIFIED OBSERVER IS OPTIMISTIC. THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY IS AGAIN LIKELY TO ELECT POLITICIANS WILLING TO COMPROMISE. (ALMOST ANY CHANGE IS A GAIN FOR THE CATHOLICS.) THE LARGER PROTESTANT COMMUNITY IS EQUALLY LIKELY TO ELECT OPPONENTS OF CHANGE. (ALMOST ANY CHANGE IS PERCEIVED AS A LOSS BY MANY PROTESTANTS.) AN ASSEMBLY DOMINATED BY HARD-LINE PROTESTANTS WOULD PRODUCE LITTLE CHANCE OF MOVEMENT TOWARD A PEACEFUL POLITICAL SOLUTION. THE BEST THAT COULD BE HOPED FOR WOULD THEN BE A CONTINUED STALEMATE -- NO REAL PROGRESS BUT NO MASSIVE INCREASE IN VIOLENCE. SUCH A STALEMATE WOULD BE INHERENTLY UNSTABLE. ANY ONE OF SEVERAL SERIOUS THREATS COULD GET OUT OF HAND AND PRODUCE WHAT IS LOCALLY DESCRIBED AS "DOOMSDAY": MASS COMMUNAL VIOLENCE, MANY THOUSANDS OF REFUGEES, PERHAPS A POGROM, PERHAPS A NEW BORDER BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH. ON THE OTHER HAND, WITH LUCK, A STALEMATE COULD PROVIDE TIME FOR MORE ATTITUDE CHANGE, WHICH IS THE MOST BASIC NEED IN THE ULSTER SITUATION, AND WHERE THERE HAS BEEN SOME PROGRESS.

3. THE MAIN OBSTACLE TO "DOOMSDAY" HAS LONG BEEN BRITISH POLICY -- AND THE TROOPS THAT BACK IT UP. BRITISH POLICY STILL SEEMS TO BE ON THE RIGHT BASIC TRACK. BUT THERE ARE SOME TROUBLING NUANCES. BRITISH GOVERNMENT LEADERS SEEM TO HAVE BEEN HINTING THAT THEY ARE GOING TO MEDDLE LESS IN ULSTER AND GIVE ITS PEOPLE MORE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR OWN DESTINY. IT SOUNDS IMPECCABLY DEMOCRATIC. IT IS MOST UNLIKELY TO WORK, GIVEN THE LACK OF ANY DEMOCRATIC CONSENSUS IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 DUBLIN 01380 01 OF 02 031247Z

NORTHERN IRELAND. SOUTHERN LEADERS ALSO FEAR THAT, UNDER THE NEW POLICY, THE BRITISH ARMY IS BEING ALLOWED TO ESCAPE CIVILIAN CONTROL AND TO HARRASS THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY UNNECESSARILY. THUS, ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER, THERE IS A GOOD DEAL OF NOSTALGIA FOR THE OLD-FASHIONED PATERNALISM OF THE PREVIOUS CONSERVATIVE ADMINISTRATION UNDER WILLIE WHITELAW. IT IS UNPRECEDENTED FOR IRISH CATHOLICS TO ROOT FOR BRITISH TORIES, AND THE REMARKABLE MR WHITELAW MUST BE GIVEN MUCH CREDIT FOR THE PHENOMENON. THE IRISH ALSO TEND TO ADMIRE

HEATH'S FIRMNESS AND TO CONTRAST IT WITH WILSON'S POLICIES.

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PAGE 01 DUBLIN 01380 02 OF 02 031248Z

42

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R 031140Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6045

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 DUBLIN 1380

LONDON POUCH BELFAST

4. THE OBVIOUS BRITISH DISTASTE FOR FEUDING IRISHMEN IS HAVING ANOTHER SIDE EFFECT. MANY CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS ALIKE ARE COMING TO BELIEVE THAT BRITAIN WILL EVENTUALLY PULL OUT COMPLETELY, EVEN IF NO VIABLE POLITICAL SOLUTION CAN BE ACHIEVED. THE PRESS IS FULL OF PARALLELS FROM EARLIER CRUMBLING OUTPOSTS OF EMPIRE. MOST OF THE COMMENTATORS OVERLOOK ONE THING: IN TERMS OF NATIONAL INTEREST, IT MADE SENSE FOR BRITAIN TO LEAVE MOST OF ITS EMPIRE. IT WOULD NOT SEEM TO MAKE MUCH SENSE FOR ANY BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO ABANDON ITS BACK YARD TO CIVIL WAR. TIES OF ALL KIND ARE TOO CLOSE: SECURITY, GEOGRAPHIC, HISTORIC, ECONOMIC, AND PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE. A BRITAIN THAT UTTERLY FAILED TO COPE IN ULSTER WOULD LOSE CONFIDENCE IN ITS ABILITY TO COPE ANYWHERE. STILL, THE FACT IS THAT MANY IRISHMEN OF ALL "PERSUASIONS" EXPECT AN EVENTUAL BRITISH WITHDRAWAL. SOME MAY THEREBY BE FRIGHTENED INTO REAL COMPROMISE, BUT EVEN MORE SEEM TO BE HARDENING THEIR POSITIONS INTO LINES OF BATTLE.

5. THE BEST THAT CAN BE SAID FOR THE DUBLIN GOVERNMENT'S POLICY IS THAT IT IS WELL-INTENTIONED. IT HAS NOT ACCOMPLISHED ANYTHING, AND THE PUBLIC DOES NOT UNDERSTAND IT. DUBLIN CLAIMS THAT

IT IS MAINTAINING A "LOW PROFILE" TO AVOID FURTHER ANNOYANCE OF THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 DUBLIN 01380 02 OF 02 031248Z

PROTESTANT COMMUNITY. BUT THE CABINET IS KNOWN TO BE SHARPLY DIVIDED, AND IT APPEARS UNABLE TO ARTICULATE A COMPREHENSIBLE POLICY. WHEN TWO INDIVIDUAL MINISTERS RECENTLY ADVANCED "PERSONAL" COMMENTS, THEY ANGERED BOTH PROTESTANTS AND CATHOLICS. SOME NORTHERN CATHOLICS NOW FEEL ABANDONED BY THE SOUTH, THUS UNDERCUTTING THE RESPONSIBLE NORTHERN CATHOLIC PARTY (THE SDLP). IN THE SOUTH, THE LOW PROFILE SEEMS TO BE APPEALING MOST TO A SEGMENT OF THE PUBLIC WHICH WOULD LIKE TO THINK THAT IT CAN IGNORE THE NORTHERN TROUBLES. UNFORTUNATELY, THIS IS SHEER ESCAPISM: TROUBLE IN ONE PART OF THE ISLAND INEVITABLE AFFECTS THE OTHER. ANY REAL SOLUTION ALSO REQUIRES ATTITUDE-CHANGE ON BOTH SIDES. TODAY, SOUTHERNERS WHO WOULD LIKE TO HELP HAVE LITTLE GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP. FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE TRADITIONAL IRISH VISION OF LEGITIMACY IS COMING INTO QUESTION, AND NO ALTERNATIVE HAS BEEN OFFERED. ONE OPTION WOULD HAVE BEEN VIGOROUS REPRESSION OF THE IRA AND PURSUIT OF DOMESTIC CIVIL-RIGHTS REFORMS, WHICH MIGHT HAVE LOWERED NORTHERN RESISTANCE TO COOPERATION WITH WHAT PROTESTANTS VIEW AS A SECTARIAN CATHOLIC REPUBLIC. THIS OPTION MAY NOT HAVE BEEN PERMANENTLY ABANDONED, BUT PRIME MINISTER COSGRAVE CERTAINLY GAVE NO CAUSE FOR OPTIMISM WHEN HE VOTED AGAINST HIS OWN GOVERNMENT'S BILL TO LEGALIZE THE SALE OF CONTRACEPTIVES. THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO BEEN INEFFECTIVE IN ITS MEASURES AGAINST THE IRA.

6. 6. CONTINUED STALEMATE NEED NOT POSE ANY NEW PROBLEMS FOR U.S. POLICY. WE HAVE A CONTINUING OBLIGATION TO REDUCE THE FLOW OF MONEY AND ARMS TO IRISH TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS. THE IRISH BELIEVE THAT SUPPORT FROM THE "IRISH NORTHERN AID COMMITTEE" IN THE US HAS BEEN OF IMPORTANT ASSISTANCE TO THE CAMPAIGN OF VIOLENCE BY THE PROVISIONAL IRA. FONMIN FITZGERALD MADE THIS POINT FORCEFULLY AND REPEATEDLY IN HIS SEPTEMBER SPEAKING TOUR OF AMERICAN CITIES.

7. LOOKING A LITTLE FARTHER AHEAD, WE SHOULD NOT SLIP INTO THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE CURRENT NORTHERN IRELAND STALEMATE AMOUNTS TO A SOLUTION. ON THE CONTRARY, THE STALEMATE IS NO MORE THAN THE AVOIDANCE OF ANY SOLUTION, AND THERE IS A DEFINITE CHANCE THAT THE "TROUBLES" COULD BECOME SOMETHING MUCH WORSE. IN THAT EVENT, THE AMERICAN PUBLIC MIGHT DEMAND SOME DEGREE OF INVOLVEMENT. AT THE MOMENT, THIS EMBASSY CANNOT THINK OF ANY NEW STEP WE MIGHT SUCCESSFULLY TAKE TO HELP HEAD OFF THE PROBLEM. IF FULL-SCALE CIVIL CONFLICT COMES

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PAGE 03 DUBLIN 01380 02 OF 02 031248Z

WE COULD CERTAINLY HELP THE REFUGEES, BUT THAT WOULD BE A VERY MINOR PALLIATIVE. WE WOULD PROBABLY BE ASKED TO APPROVE A UN PEACEKEEPING FORCE, BUT IT WOULD BE A VERY POOR SUBSTITUTE FOR THE CURRENT BRITISH TROOPS. OUR RECOMMENDATIONS, THUS, HAVE NOT CHANGED SINCE OUR PARA SUBMISSION (A-58 OF JUNE 24, 1974).

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